

## A STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE OF RURAL WOMEN TOWARDS MASS MEDIA AND ITS USAGE IN BIKANER DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

*Media is considered to be the most important tool of society in the modern times as it has the power to reach out to a large audience by mass communication and create an impact wherever it can reach, which now has become far and wide. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban/rural), educational status, social status (caste and class), and age. As women constitute a very important part of the country there is need to understand and highlight this target group in case of getting information through mass media. How they use mass media and how much they know about mass media. The present study was conducted in two villages of Bikaner district of Rajasthan purposively. The sample of the study comprised of total 90 rural women (45 rural women from each village) which were selected randomly. The results showed that 77.80 per cent of rural women have high knowledge level towards mass media followed by rural women (16.70%) have a medium level of knowledge. The frequency of usage of mass media depicts that 20 per cent rural women had never used mass media such as booklets, billboards and electronic booklets in their life. Whereas, 52.20 per cent rural women watch television occasionally and 46.70 per cent rural women were using the mobile phone frequently. Still, the rural women faced constraints in using mass media such as lack of internet connectivity, lack of electricity, lack of education, lack of training for handling mass media, lack of communication etc.*

**KEYWORDS:** Mass Media, Rural Women, Knowledge & Communication

**Received:** Feb 17, 2018; **Accepted:** Mar 09, 2018; **Published:** Mar 23, 2018; **Paper Id.:** IJESRAPR201810

### INTRODUCTION

Media is considered to be the most important tool of society in the modern times as it has the power to reach out to a large audience by mass communication and create an impact wherever it can reach, which now has become far and wide. Mass media has spread rapidly throughout the developing world, with increasing penetration of television, radio, and newspapers. Recent evidence indicates that this growing mass media can contribute significantly to socioeconomic and political development. It can facilitate access to knowledge, motivate beneficial changes in individual behaviors, and catalyze the process of social change in sectors such as health, agriculture, and education (Locksley 2009; Manyozo 2008; Unesco/Undp 2007).

Mass media are the cultural industries – the channels of communication – that produce and distribute songs, novels, TV shows, newspapers, movies, video games, internet services, and other cultural products to large numbers of people. The historical development of media and communication can be traced through several overlapping phases or eras in which newer forms of technology disrupted and modified older forms – a process that many academics, critics, and media professionals call convergence.” Even though mass media had information as a

principal function, and especially as the society got more computerized, significant changes in the behavioral manifestations have appeared in the individual experiences regarding the gain of knowledge, the same influences of mass-media refused by some can be accepted with ease by others.

In the history of human development, a woman has been as important as a man. In fact, the status, employment, and work performed by women in society are the indicator of a nation's overall progress. Without the participation of women in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of a country will be stagnated. Women constitute half of the humanity, even contributing two-thirds of world's work hours. She earns only one-third of the total income and owns less than one-tenth of the world's resources. This shows that the economic status of women is in pathetic condition and this is more so in a country like India. Among total Indian population of 1027.10 million, women constitute 495.73 million. Therefore, "women constitute nearly 50 per cent of the population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50 per cent of food commodities consumed by the country. They earn one-third of remuneration and own 10 per cent of the property or wealth of the country" (Reddy et al., 1994).

Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban/rural), educational status, social status (caste and class), and age. Policies on women's empowerment exist at the national, state, and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence, and political participation. However, there are significant gaps between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level.

In Rajasthan, Studies have continuously pointed out the fact that all the indicators of the status of women in Rajasthan - literacy, employment, sex ratio, high fertility rates, age at marriage, health and nutrition- are very low. There is a vicious circle that needs to be broken. In the case of women, it is also true that tackling individual indicators may not solve the problem in its entirety because there are so many inter-linkages that need to be understood before coming up with a comprehensive strategy. In the last decade of the last century, a number of initiatives in the field of education have been taken up in Rajasthan that has shown remarkable results.

As women constitute a very important part of the country there is need to understand and highlight this target group in case of getting information through mass media. How they use mass media and how much they know about mass media. However, the present study entitled "A Study on knowledge of rural women towards mass media and its usage in Bikaner District" was designed to know these aspects. The study would be helpful for the policy makers, women, Rajasthan Government to increase the participation of women in mass media for fetching vital information and for their development intellectually. Hence, an attempt has been made to know the knowledge of rural women towards mass media with the following objectives:

- To know the knowledge of rural women towards mass media and its usage
- To study the socio-economic characteristics of rural women in Bikaner
- To find out the constraints faced by rural women towards mass media

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sterling(1995) focuses in AIR (Advancement through Interactive Radio) is a software and hardware system that adds interactivity to community radio, giving community radio listeners, especially women, a voice with which to respond

to programming, and to participate in the creation of programming content. AIR enables women, who are the primary economic driving force in community development, to “talk back” to the community radio station, in order to better facilitate participation as well as demand and produce information that contributes to their advancement. The study found that there is significant positive support for future work; the AIR project demonstrates clear evidence that the experiences of articulation and audibility have begun to positively impact both women’s self-esteem and community appreciation of women’s social status.

Florescu (2014) showed that Mass-media (media of mass communication) represents the totality of mass information (radio, television, press, internet etc.). Even though mass media had information as a principal function, and especially as the society got more computerized, significant changes in the behavioral manifestations have appeared in the individual experiences regarding the gain of knowledge, the same influences of mass-media refused by some can be accepted with ease by others. If the consumer has the control upon the information, the overwhelming impact of media does not affect him/her in a negative way.

Maqsood (2015) in her study about the use of mobile technology among rural women in Pakistan for agricultural extension information reported that being aware of such services was not the indicator that motivated the respondents to access the services. The cell phone is, no doubt, the most widely and frequently used means of accessing these services. The educational qualification was significantly related to the use of mobile technology to access telecommunication-based agricultural extension information services.

Mohapatra(2015) showed that her study is related to the status of women in Indian society from ancient days till today. It gives importance to the position of women in various fields like family life, social life, and work situation. It highlights on female foeticide, low literacy level of women, women’s low nutritional status, women’s role in decision making, their position as per Indian tradition etc. This paper also gives emphasis on the number of women in a total workforce, torture of them by men in family life, social life and in other fields where they are participants. Lastly, it concludes on the importance of women and role of society for the emancipation of women from male- dominated society and their oppression and suppression.

Shuwa et.al(2015) The findings of the study on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents showed that 36% of the respondent are between the age of 31-40 years and 90% of them are married and practicing farming for 10-20 years (53%). Based on the educational level, the respondents 43% of them obtained a Quranic education. Based on the availability of mass media, the respondents 85% opined that Radio communication was available with them and 85% of them attested that radio is their source of information and they prefer as their best mean of getting information. On the visit by extension agents, 98% of them opined that they are not noticed by an extension agent. Also, 85% of the respondents indicate that they got information through mass media and is the only strategy adopted by the extension agent in reaching them. Based on the impact of mass media on their agricultural production 65% of them opined that they had access to input supply and farm resources. The SWOT analysis indicates that the strengths they have are access to farm resources and input supply. Which the weaknesses manifested was inadequate fund (73%).

## **METHODOLOGY**

To study the knowledge of rural women towards mass media and its usage, the ex-post facto research design was adopted. The study was conducted in two villages namely Sagar and beechwal village of Bikaner district of Rajasthan

purposively. The sample of the study comprised of total 90 rural women (45 rural women from village Sagar + 45 rural women from village Beechwal) of Bikaner district of Rajasthan. The sample was selected randomly. An interview schedule was framed to collect demographic information of the respondents. To study the knowledge and usage of mass media, an interview schedule including questions on knowledge, usage, and constraints was prepared. The collected data from the respondents were scored, tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, knowledge index.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 showed that 52.20% of rural women belonged to young age (18 – 35 years). It was found that 36.70% of rural women belong to other backward caste followed by rural women (34.40%) belongs to SC caste. The probable reason might be that in selected villages of Bikaner region the dominant communities were nittad, gadwal, duddi, jhakar, bijarania, godara etc. It was observed that (31.10%) of rural women were illiterately followed by rural women (24.40%) done their education up to graduation level. In case of illiteracy among rural women, poverty might be the strong reason for not providing further education and other contributing factors could be the lack of awareness, early marriage, home responsibilities etc. More than half (58.90%) of the rural women belong to joint families whereas 41.10% of rural women belongs to nuclear families. The probable reason may be that still, the elderly members of the family in rural areas might have the belief that living together since generation to generation may strengthen the unity of their family and they would be able to co-operate each other in different situations. A majority (61.10%) of the rural women belongs to medium size families followed by rural women (22.20%) belongs to small family size.

**Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile of Rural Women in Bikaner District**

(n=90)

Socio-Economic Characteristics	Category	F (%)
<b>1. AGE</b>	Young (18 – 35 years)	47(52.20%)
	Middle (36 – 50 years)	21(23.30%)
	Old (> 51 years)	22(24.40%)
<b>2. CASTE</b>	Forward caste (GM)	26(28.90%)
	Other backward caste	33(36.70%)
	SC	31(34.40%)
	ST	0(0.00%)
<b>3. Gender</b>	Male	0(0.00%)
	Female	90(100.00%)
<b>4. Education</b>	Illiterate	28(31.10%)
	Primary education	14(15.60%)
	High school	18(20.00%)
	Graduation	22(24.40%)
	Post Graduation	08(8.90%)
<b>5. Family Type</b>	Nuclear	37(41.10%)
	Joint	53(58.90%)
<b>6. Family Size</b>	Small (1 – 4 member)	20(22.20%)
	Medium (5 – 8 members)	55(61.10%)
	Large (9 & above)	15(16.70%)
<b>7. Annual Income</b>	<Rs.17,000/-	30(33.30%)
	Rs.17,000/- to Rs.34,000/-	44(48.90%)
	Rs. 34,000/- to Rs.51,000/-	16(17.80%)
	>Rs. 51,000	-

Socio-Economic Characteristics	Category	F (%)
8. Family Occupation	Non-Wage Earner	0(0.00%)
	Farm Labour	24(26.70%)
	Farming	49(54.40%)
	Service	17(18.90%)
	Enterprise	-
9. Marital Status	Unmarried	29(32.20%)
	Married	60(66.70%)
	Divorcee	1(1.10%)

The reason may be the lack of awareness and knowledge in rural people for accepting the advantages of having small family size. Other contributing reason might be that in rural areas most people had strong belief that medium to large size families had more helping hands. Nearly half (48.90%) of the rural women had their family annual income in the range of Rs. 17,000 to Rs. 34,000 i.e. semi – medium followed by rural women (33.30%) had family annual income < Rs. 17,000. The probable reasons might be that their main family occupation was farming and in this occupation, they were able to earn the income which ranges between Rs.17, 000 to Rs. 34,000.

More than half (54.40%) of the rural women had farming their major family occupation followed by rural women (26.70%) had farm labor as the major occupation. The reason may be that more than half of the Indian population lives in rural areas and farming is one of the largest occupations performed by the rural people because they were totally dependent on agriculture for their survival, which is a backbone of the country's economy.

A majority (66.70%) of the rural women were found married followed by rural women (32.20%) were unmarried. The probable reason may be that in rural areas of Rajasthan marriage occurs in the early age or by 18 years because it was considered as the most important responsibility of the parents and especially the society.

**Table 2: Knowledge of Rural Women towards Mass Media**

(N=90)

Statement	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	Knowledge Index	Mean	S.D.
1. Mass media are communication devices	81	90.00	90	0.90	0.30
2. Mass media are effective means advertising, marketing, communication and spreading information	69	76.70	76.66	0.76	0.42
3. Newspaper comes in print media	73	81.10	81.11	0.81	0.39
4. Television involves both audio and visual features	75	83.30	83.33	0.83	0.37
5. Mobile phone, computer and internet belongs to new age media	69	76.70	76.66	0.76	0.42
6. mobile phone provides minimally provides two way communication	69	76.70	76.66	0.76	0.42
7. Mass media is known for Disseminating information, providing entertainment and delivering important news	79	87.80	87.77	0.87	0.32
8. Mass media handling requires training to use mass media	83	92.20	92.22	0.92	0.26
9 Mass media tools are generally preferred in local language	80	88.90	88.88	0.88	0.31
10 Mass media tools are used for mass group	80	88.90	88.88	0.88	0.31

**Table 3: Knowledge Level of Rural Women towards Mass Media**

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low (<3)	05	5.60%
2.	Medium (3-6)	15	16.70%
3.	High (>6)	70	77.80%

It can be clearly observed from Table 2 that Most (92.20%) of the rural women have knowledge that mass media handling requires training to use mass media followed by rural women (90.00%) who have knowledge that mass media are communication devices. Rural women (88.90%) also have knowledge that mass media are generally preferred in the local language and they are mostly used for the mass group. From Table 3 it can be clearly seen that 77.80 per cent of rural women have high knowledge level towards mass media followed by rural women (16.70%) have a medium level of knowledge. The probable reasons of high -level knowledge might be that rural women those who were able to pursue their higher education due to family support were know about different communication devices, as in colleges they were able to receive the quality education where different communication devices used to teach the students. The women who were not able to pursue education but, still they had knowledge about basic and essential communication mass media such as TV., radio, mobile phone etc. regarding recent and high technology based mass media such as computer, electronic booklets, billboards etc., they don't have proper knowledge about them but they know that mobile phone, computer, and internet comes under new age media. A majority (76.70%) of the rural women knows that mass media are effective means advertising, marketing, communication and spreading information because they saw Ads and a different message from government perspective like about any scheme, communication through mobile phones.

**Table 4: Frequency of Usage of Mass Media by Rural Women in Bikaner District**

(N=90)

ICT Tools	Usage			Mean	S. D.
	Frequently	Occasionally	Never		
1. Television	12(13.30%)	47(52.20%)	31(34.40%)	0.788	0.661
2. Radio	35(38.90%)	43(47.80%)	12(13.30%)	1.255	0.679
3. Mobile phone	42(46.70%)	40(44.40%)	8(8.90%)	1.337	0.646
4. Newspaper	14(15.60%)	35(38.90%)	41(45.60%)	0.700	0.725
5. Magazine	0(0.00%)	16(17.80%)	74(82.20%)	0.177	0.384
6. Computer	0(0.00%)	7(7.80%)	83(92.20%)	0.077	0.269
7. Internet	0(0.00%)	12(13.30%)	78(86.70%)	0.133	0.341
8. Booklets	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	90(100%)	0.000	0.000
9. Billboards	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	90(100%)	0.000	0.000
10. Electronic booklets	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	90(100%)	0.000	0.000

Usage of mass media by rural women in Bikaner district has been shown in table 4 which depicts that cent per cent rural women had never used mass media such as booklets, billboards and electronic booklets in their life. The reason could be that they are too recent for rural women to use and they are not in daily use by their society for different purposes. Whereas, 52.20 per cent rural women watch television occasionally and 46.70 per cent rural women were using the mobile phone frequently. As, television is a an effective medium for the rural women to get information and entertainment but still many rural families don't have T. V. and those rural women families who have T. V. in their home also don't have that much free time to watch television because of gender stereotype that all the household work should only be done by the women. In case of radio, only 38.90 per cent rural women using radio frequently. The reason could be of fewer listeners that nowadays, radio is mostly replaced by television. Most (92.20%) of the rural women never used a computer because the families in rural areas couldn't afford the computer due to its expensive feature and lack of teacher to teach the use and handling of computer and also the lack of free time from the rural women point of view.

#### **Constraints Faced by Rural Women in usage of Mass Media**

The following constraints were faced by rural women during usage of mass media:

- Lack of internet connectivity
- Lack of electricity
- Lack of education
- Lack of training for handling mass media
- Lack of communication
- Lack of interest
- Lack of support from society/family to use different mass media
- Lack of awareness about different mass media
- Lack of contact with media professionals and social workers
- Consider as unfelt need to use the media
- Lack of free time
- Lack of teacher in rural areas

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study thus concluded that apart from urban women, rural women also know better and basics about mass media which they have seen and used in their daily life for different purposes; which could be collecting information about any governmental scheme, entertainment, listening news, watching serials etc. recent mass media such as billboards, internet electronic computer haven't used by them because of lack of education and lack of felt need. Providing education and training to rural women for handling different old and new mass media and help them to get acquainted with benefits, usage of mass media. They could be the most powerful communication tools for the women; as such household women may start their home business with the power of the internet and all. They just need attention, non- formal education and training towards mass media.

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